

4.0 SPECIAL PURPOSE PARKS

4.1 BOTANICAL GARDENS

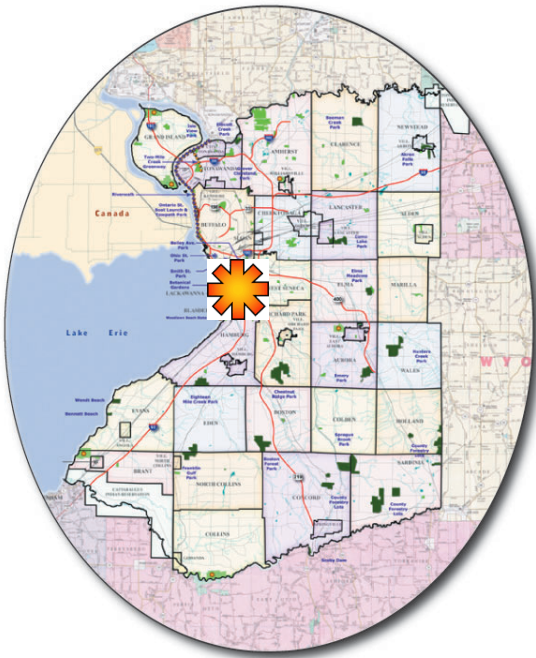
DESCRIPTION

The Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens is a world-class facility that features 11 greenhouses which houses unique collections of orchids, bromeliads, begonias, cacti, ferns, palms, citrus, and an herb marketplace. It is all housed in a masterly designed glass conservatory structure, which reminds us of Buffalo's wealth and progressiveness from over a century ago. Seasonal flower shows are a popular attraction within the region. The grounds of the Botanical Gardens occupy 11.57 acres within the 153-acre South Park on the southern edge of the City of Buffalo at the Lackawanna City line. The land is generally level with a slight rise at the building approach. The building has recently undergone extensive restoration of its steel and glass structure and the grounds have been the focus of recent master planning efforts.

PARK AND AREA HISTORY

The Botanical Gardens is the product of three extraordinary visionaries: landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, architects Lord & Burnham and botanist / plant explorer John F. Cowell. The Botanical Garden was an original element in the plan for the City of Buffalo's South Park, which was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted in the 1880s. South Park was constructed between 1894 and 1900 from 156 acres of farm land. A conservatory was included to showcase tropical plant species while the rest of the park was designed to feature more hardy temperate species including an Arboretum, a Pinetum, a Shrub Garden and a Bog Garden. The more formalized gardens around the conservatory were designed to lead visitors into the more informal park.

The Botanical Gardens is a tri-domed, Victorian-style, glass, wood and steel structure opened in 1900 and designed by the premier conservatory architects of the time: Lord & Burnham, Co. from Downstate New York. It was designed in a similar style to the earlier "Crystal Palace" in London built around 1850. When it was built in 1897-1899, it was one of the largest public greenhouses in the country built at a cost of \$130,000.00. Today there are



EXISTING PARK FEATURES AND FACILITIES

- Historic Glass structure, designed by Lord & Burnham (1897-1899)
- 67 ft. high palm dome
- skywalk, waterfall and rainforest area
- cactus house
- tropical fruit house
- outdoor Shrub Garden and perennial beds, etc.

less than a dozen large Victorian conservatories remaining in America.

Over the past 100 years, the facility has had numerous cycles of deterioration and rebirth. In 1979, the conservatory was once again in poor shape and city budget difficulties threatened the facility with closure. A neighborhood advocate formed the Buffalo and Erie County Botanical gardens Society to help save the structure. The publicity worked and the County of Erie took over the Conservatory in 1981. recent years have seen much renovation and rejuvenation of the facility, including the front entrance portico, glass dome structures, outdoor Shrub Garden and numerous other facility enhancements and repairs.

LOCAL CONTEXT

The Botanical Garden is located within South Park at the City of Buffalo border with the City of Lackawanna. Access into the facility is from South Park Avenue leading north-south from Downtown Buffalo, and also the major east-west route, Ridge Road, which links to the I-90 Thruway to the west and NY Route 5 to the west. Contextually, the Botanical Garden and Park are more closely related to the adjacent business district along Ridge Road (Lackawanna) than they are to the nearby South Buffalo Neighborhoods. However, the Olmsted Parkway system is a direct linkage into the area neighborhoods, with the Botanical Garden at the southerly terminus. There is also great potential to link the Botanical Garden better to the “Our Lady of Victory” Basilica, a world-renowned structure only a couple blocks away.

RECREATIONAL CONTEXT

Given its “Special Purpose” within this study, the Botanical Garden is a one of a kind facility and therefore has no equal in the area.

CURRENT ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

- Continuing to maintain this unique and costly structure

MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Consider the Botanical Gardens as an important part of the County’s overall cultural and heritage attractions, including an important linkage with the oldest 5 County Parks, the Olmsted Park System, Old Wendt Mansion,*

OLV Basilica, etc.

- *Continue to support restoration efforts currently in progress, to ensure complete and authentic restoration of one of the County's premier heritage attractions.*
- *Work closely with the City of Buffalo and Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy to achieve full and authentic restoration of South Park, including the phased relocation of the park's 9-hole Golf Course to a new "reclaimed" Brownfield site just north of the existing park (see the South Buffalo Redevelopment Plan by the City of Buffalo).*
- *Support the initiatives recently developed on the County's Strategic Area Plan for South Park/Botanical Gardens/Our Lady of Victory Basilica in both South Buffalo and the City of Lackawanna.*

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IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES / PARK SPECIFIC ACTIONS

PRIORITY KEY

- S Short Term *(1 - 3 years)*
- M Mid Term *(4 - 10 years)*
- L Long Term *(11 - 20+ years)*
- O Ongoing *(Continuing Efforts each year)*